



CAMP WHITE GRENADE II



"Preserving the Past for the Future"

VOLUME 4, NO. 1

NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP WHITE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MARCH 1999

CAPTAIN MEL COTTON

Battery C. 347th Field Artillery, 91st Division

In January of 1941, the last thing on Private Mel Cotton's mind was that his one year military obligation could be extended on the 7th of December of that year for the duration of a war yet to come. Nor did he realize that at the conclusion of that war he would be the recipient of the Bronze Star. Private Cotton had entered the military to complete his one year obligations so that he might return to his job as a trouble-shooter and overseer for a mining dredge near Medford. On December 7, 1941, the Army decided that Private Cotton would not only be extended for the duration of the war, but also that he would be sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to become an artillery officer.

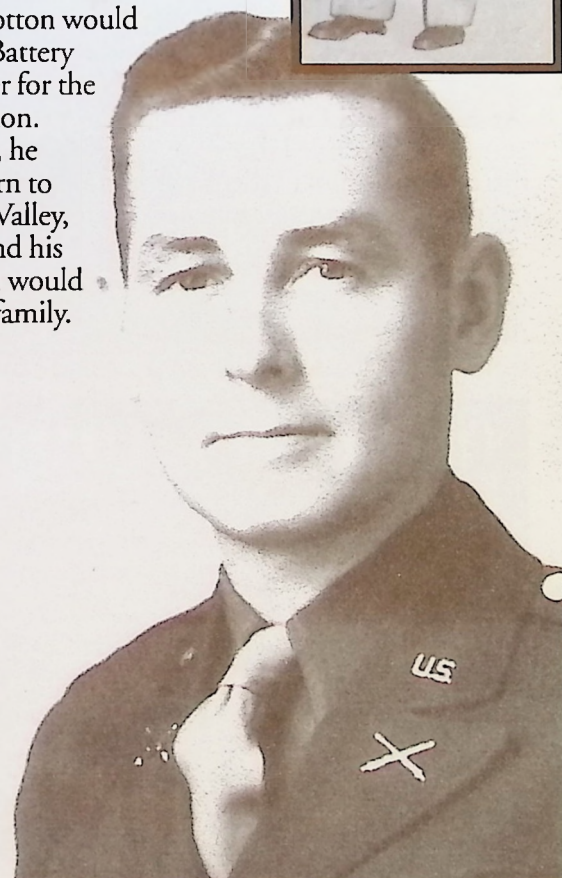
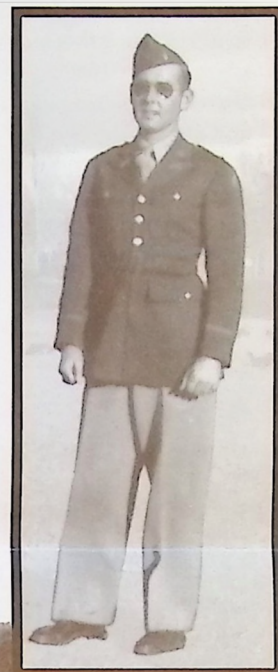
Upon completion of Officer's Candidate School, Mel requested the yet to be completed Camp White in Oregon on his application for his first duty station. Although he was originally

from California, Mel's brief stay in Medford prior to enlisting convinced him that he would like to return to the area. He also convinced several fellow graduates to list Camp White on their applications, telling them that Oregon was nothing but tall timber and white water. Mel had never seen the Agate Desert, where Camp White was built. He laughs now when he says that his classmates have never forgiven him.

Upon arriving at Camp White, 2nd Lieutenant Cotton's first assignment was aide-de-camp to Brigadier General Edward S. Ott. Realizing that the 91st would soon see action, Mel requested that he be assigned to a combat field battery. General Ott, recognizing the new officer's sincere wish to serve as a field battery commander, assigned Mel to serve as the new captain for C Battery, 347th Field Artillery, 91st Division.

At the ripe old age of 21, Mel was to assume responsibility for overseeing the activities of 4 officers, 100 enlisted men and four 105 field artillery guns.

Captain Cotton would serve as C Battery commander for the war's duration. Afterwards, he would return to the Rogue Valley, where he and his wife Evelyn would raise their family.





COMMANDER'S CORNER

Al Inlow

Dear friends and fellow members:

The Camp White Military Museum, located at the Veterans' Affairs Domiciliary in the building that housed the 79th General Hospital in 1942, has just completed its first year. We've been busy constantly updating the displays and expanding our collections.

Just one year ago Executive Director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs George Andries, Jr., dedicated Camp White Plaza during the museum's opening ceremonies.

The Plaza's beautiful parklike setting has been designed for the pleasure of veterans and visitors to the Domiciliary and museum. The park features several plaques honoring the units that trained at Camp White and recognizing everyone who was a part of the camp from 1942-46.



Camp White Plaza

At this time all of us at the Camp White Historical Association who manage this Museum want to thank Mr. Andries for his effort in helping us preserve our military past for the future.

AL INLOW, PRESIDENT

Camp White Historical Association and Museum

OFFICERS, 1998-99

President Al Inlow
 Vice President Bill Cope
 Secretary Bill Seibert
 Treasurer Robert Prater
 Executive Director Rod Boren
 Collections Curator Del Hussey
 Museum Coordinator Carolyn Sharrock

The *Grenade* accepts suggestions and contributions from readers. If you have a story idea or appropriate event to promote, write Carolyn Sharrock at P.O. Box 2373, White City, OR 97503.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Bill Seibert



Above:

Bill Seibert, Secretary of the CWA

Bill was born and grew up in Florida. He graduated high school in 1933, went to work as an office boy and junior draftsman in an architect's office, and in 1937 entered the University of Florida as an Architecture major. In June 1942, he was inducted into the army, went through basic and officer training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and in 1942 was assigned to Camp White.

He arrived in Medford on February 4, 1943. He served briefly in Otto Ewaldsen's company in the 650th Engr Topo Bn. On March 1, 1942, he and four other officers activated the 299th Engr. Combat Bn.

On April 5, 1944, he shipped out for England. He landed on Utah Beach about 1/2 hour before h-hour on D-Day to remove beach obstacles. The next two months were spent in road construction, guarding bridges, and supporting the airborne divisions.

After the St. Lo Breakthrough, he followed the German retreat through Paris to the Belgian-Holland border. During the Battle of the Bulge Bill, two other officers, and about 45 enlisted men were surrounded, and captured. The three officers escaped and rejoined the 299th on Christmas night. For Bill, the remainder of the war consisted

of pursuing the retreating German army across the Roer and Rhine rivers into the Ruhr Valley, ending up just south of the Danube River when the war ended.

The 299th was deactivated and Bill reported to a replacement center in France and shipped out from Marseilles for Manila, probably to participate in the invasion of Japan. But the war ended about three days out and he landed at Norfolk, Virginia.

Bill came to Medford, arriving on Labor Day, married Jean Lydiard in the First Presbyterian Church the following Sunday, honeymooned for a week at Lake of the Woods, and headed back to Florida. On October 12, 1945, he was released with an inactive duty status, and Jean joined him in Jacksonville, Florida.

He returned to the University of Florida and got an architectural degree in June, 1948. He worked in Jacksonville until April 1950, when he moved to Medford and opened an architectural office. Except for two years in San Francisco and one in Fresno, he maintained an office in Medford from 1950 to 1989, when he closed his office and worked for his son's firm until retiring in July 1990. He has enjoyed retirement by volunteering with many non-profit organizations.

HISTORY ON DISPLAY:

1ST LT. WELDON JOHNSTON

Lt. Weldon Johnston served at Camp White and eventually with the 202nd General Hospital in the European Theater. Lt. Johnston, like other nurses stationed at Camp White was part of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. WAAC officers like Lt. Johnston were shown the same courtesies and greeted in the same way as their male counterparts.

Camp White – City in the Agate Desert, describes what the army expected of its nurses: "...the nurses were women, and in 1942 the Army had a very separate view of how they should be treated as well as how they themselves should behave. Their quarters, in a long series of wood frame buildings just west of the hospital itself, were closely guarded by the Military Police. The station hospital issued a two-page "Rules for Nurses" that included such specifics as:

"The status of an Army nurse is that of an officer. She will, therefore, have no social relations with enlisted men. Each nurse will provide bed linen, towels, etc ... and pay for laundering of same. Nurses will wear the prescribed uniform at all times. The wearing of colored handkerchiefs and colored slips with the white uniform is prohibited ... Colored jewelry, earrings, or flowers are not a part of a military uniform and will not be worn."



HIGHLIGHTS OF EVENTS—MAY '42 -

— from the *Camp White Grenade*, September 16, 1943.

Courtesy of the Southern Oregon Historical Society Research Library

SPRING 1942—The original cadre of officers and enlisted men begin arriving at Camp White.

MAY 21, 1942—Col. Owen R. Meredith becomes first commanding officer of this Post.

JUL 1942—Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt arrives to take command of the 91st Infantry Division.

JUL 1942—Medford USO holds official opening at 234 East Main Street.

AUG 15, 1942—Fir Tree Division reactivated in impressive ceremonies.

AUG 17, 1942—Maj. Theron W. Bean, area engineer, formally presents "Key to Camp White" to Col. Owen R. Meredith, commanding officer.

AUG 1942—First War Department Theater opens....Post Laundry begins operation....Modern Station Hospital officially opened.

SEPT 15, 1942—Formal dedication ceremonies of Camp White conducted by SCU 1913.

SEPT 18, 1942—IX Corps established at Camp White with Lt. Col. Edward C. Snow, executive officer.

SEPT 29, 1942—Col. Norman P. Groff arrives to assume post of executive officer, IX Corps.

OCT 5, 1942—Brig. Gen. Amos Thomas arrives to take over command of Post, relieving Col. Meredith.

OCT 1942—Football gets under way...Sports Arena officially opened...Post Chapel

dedicated...Miss Mary Wall crowned as Queen at USO Victory Carnival.

Nov 11, 1942—Armistice Day....353rd Bulldozers down SCU Bulldogs in grid game at Medford High School field.

Nov 26, 1942—Thanksgiving Day...Camp celebrates with turkey and all the trimmin's....351st Wildcats trim 353rd Bulldozers in "Turkey Classic" to win Camp grid crown.

DEC 1942—Basketball and boxing take over Sports Arena....First USO Show comes to Camp.

DEC 25, 1942—"MERRY CHRISTMAS"

JAN 1, 1943—"HAPPY NEW YEAR"

TAPS

If you know of a member passing, please contact the association and we will add them to our Taps.

Major Ralph D. O'Dell, MD—June, 1998.

George L. Peters 91st Div. C-Co., 361st Infantry—March 3, 1998.

JAN 2, 1943—Lt. Col. Park B. Herrick relieves Lt. Col. Frank N. Mallory as Post executive officer.

JAN 24, 1943—Official opening of Salvation Army USO, featuring one-hour broadcast.

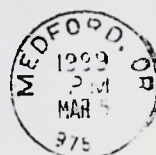
JAN 29, 1943—GI's greeted with first edition of the official Camp White newspaper.

FEBRUARY 12, 1943—Baby newspaper finally given official name, *The Camp White Grenade*.

CAMP WHITE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 2373

White City, Oregon 97503



Eagle Point Historical Society
PO Box 201
Eagle Point, OR 97524